



National Religious Coalition on Creation Care

September 13, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Dear President Obama,

We wish to thank you for the steps that you and your administration have taken to save marine areas and address climate change. This dire threat already affects U.S. citizens along our nation's 95,471 miles of shoreline. In a recent interview with the *New York Times*, you described reports from your chief scientific advisor as being "terrifying." We agree with you wholeheartedly.

What is most terrifying is that time is running out to avoid irreversible, catastrophic changes that could outstrip the capacity of human civilization – to say nothing of countless species – to adapt. Without unprecedented rapid reductions in CO₂ emissions year after year for the next fifty years we are likely to lock in a mass extinction event of ocean ecosystems.

The National Religious Coalition on Creation Care (NRCCC) is composed of members of all the major faith groups in America, including Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, and Orthodox Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Joined in prayer, and united with people of every religious tradition, we advocate for a right relationship to God's creation. As you heard from Pope Francis when he visited last year, and as he continues to speak out, now is the time to act for sake of the poor, for future generations, for all of creation.

In these last months of your Presidency, we urge to you to use every tool at your command to set in place additional policies that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, sequester more carbon dioxide in the biosphere, and protect the oceans.

We specifically urge you to take the following Executive actions, which do not require Congressional approval:

1. Ensure that the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) do not undermine efforts to address the climate crisis. Ensure that trade agreements do not contain provisions that would prevent a future Administration from putting a domestic price on carbon pollution while imposing a tariff on countries that do not price carbon pollution. We share the concerns raised by multiple environmental groups in a letter to you on Sept. 1, 2016, that the TTIP undermines the Paris Climate Agreements.¹

¹ http://webiva-downton.s3.amazonaws.com/877/4f/c/9026/2016_9_1_TTIP_G20_letter_final_version_for_release.pdf

2. As FDR did after Pearl Harbor, communicate to the American public in a special, nationally televised address, the climate emergency that we face:
 - a. Six glaciers on the huge West Antarctic ice sheet are in a process of unstoppable melt that will lead to an eventual sea-level rise of 1.2 meters (4 feet). These cities include, among others, Charleston, New Orleans, Fort Lauderdale, Tampa, Saint Petersburg, and Miami.
 - b. The level of carbon dioxide in the global atmosphere is higher today than it has been for 3 million years (when sea levels were between 50 and 80 feet higher than they are today).
 - c. The transition to a more arid climate in the U.S. Southwest and northern Mexico may already be under way,² and if we continue on our present path, we increase the risk of locking in permanent dust bowl conditions in the U.S. Southwest, as well as in southern Europe, northern Africa, southern Africa, and Western Australia.³
 - d. It is crucial that the language of “emergency” be adopted in this speech and in all your statements about climate change. We urge you to conclude your speech with a call to mobilize the nation with the same focus and determination with which we mobilized during World War II, so that we reach 100 percent renewable energy in two or three decades. This is precisely the language of the recently adopted Democratic Platform: “We are committed to a national mobilization, and to leading a global effort to mobilize nations to address this threat on a scale not seen since World War II.”
 - e. Provide a dramatic presentation of the benefits that other nations already enjoy as they make the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy, and of the economic benefits that Americans would enjoy.
 - f. Explain to the public that placing a rising price on carbon, using a fee structure in which 100% of the fees would be returned to households as dividends, creates jobs, increases economic growth and drives energy efficiency and renewable energy revolutions. In addition, a tariff would be imposed on goods imported from countries that don’t price carbon.

²<http://www.sciencemag.org/content/316/5828/1181.full.pdf?keytype=ref&siteid=sci&ijkey=CALzmuA00800>

³ <http://www.pnas.org/content/106/6/1704.abstract>

3. Stop all drilling and all fracking on Federal public lands.
4. Call for an immediate end to governmental subsidies and tax deductions that support the exploration, extraction, delivery and consumption of fossil fuels.
5. Call for increased subsidies for renewable energy.
6. Reject new pipelines and proposals to expand existing pipelines and refining operations. Do everything to ensure Canadian tar sands stay in the ground.
7. Ban commercial logging, both green and post-fire, and privatization of our National Forests. Our National Forests (both green and post-fire) sequester tremendous amounts of carbon, thus mitigating climate change and slowing ocean acidification. More specifically we ask you to veto the "Wildfire Budgeting, Response, and Forest Management Act of 2016," which weakens environmental laws and increases logging.
8. Launch a nation-wide reforestation plan. We need grants for Civilian Conservation Corp. and Green Belt Movement-style reforestation projects.
9. Modify the Methane Challenge Program emission goal to: "Cut methane emissions from this sector by 40-45 percent from 2012 levels by 2025, including limiting leakage to less than 1% at any wellhead, in any timeframe and in total."
10. Urge the EPA in its calculation of U.S. fossil fuel emissions to include emissions from fossil fuels that are sold to or refined for other countries.
11. Create marine sanctuaries. Sign the New England Atlantic Marine Monument Act, which includes the New England Sea Mounts and the Cashes Ledge, off Maine Coast. Ask the world to set aside a large portion of the Sargasso Sea.
12. Provide presidential support, leadership, and voice for an ambitious legislative reauthorization of the Magnuson–Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA). Support a Seafood Tracing Act to track fishing practices.
13. As Commander in Chief of the Armed Services, we ask you to stop Naval sonar testing and explosions, which is negatively impacting marine mammal life.

We are in the midst of a planetary emergency. With increasing alarm, scientists declare that we have only a very short period of time in which to avert an escalating, unmanageable cascade of changes that is on the path to render the planet ungovernable and large sections of it uninhabitable. Christians, Jews, and Muslims all share the same stories of creation that tell of God's delight in this earth and its abundance, and we honor the Creator's command to care for this garden that God placed in our care.

As people of faith, we agree it is unethical to leave a ruined world to our children, grandchildren and generations yet unborn. We ask you to act decisively and consistently so we can all look back with gratitude on your legacy of hope. We are upholding you in prayer, asking God to bless your efforts to inspire and mobilize this country to choose a life-sustaining path.

Faithfully yours,

Signatories

(not shown on this version)